OBJECTIVE 3 ASSESSMENT

STRENGTHENING SOMALI GOVERNANCE

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CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

ARDO	Aragti Relief and Development Organization
CDCH	Center for Dialogue, Civic Education, and Human Rights
CRD	Centre for Research and Dialogue
HIPS	Heritage Institute for Policy Studies
HIRDA	Himilo Relief and Development Agency
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoI	Ministry of Information
MoIF	Ministry of Interior & Federalism
MoJCA	Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs
MoPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
MoYS	Ministry of Youth and Sport
MoWHR	Ministry of Women and Human Rights
NUSOJ	National Union of Somali Journalists
OCVP	Observatory for Peace and Violent Prevention
PHRN	Peace and Human Rights Network
PUNSAA	Puntland Non-State Actors Association
TASS	Tadamun Social Society
SFS	Somali Family Services
SNOW	Somali National Women Organization
SOCENSA	Somalia-South Central Non-state Actors
SORADI	Social Research and Development Institute
SWDC	Somali Women Development Centre
SWLA	Somali Women's Lawyer Association
SONSAF	Somaliland Non-state Actor Forum
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WEAVE	Women Education and Voicing Entrepreneurship
WB	World Bank
WIJA	Women in Journalism Association

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Overview of SSG Project

The Strengthening Somali Governance (SSG) project is designed to support the development of more effective and accountable Somali government institutions, by supporting both the Federal Government of the Republic of Somalia (FGS) as well as state and local administrations in their efforts to meet the New Deal Framework and their commitments to develop sound government institutions. SSG activities will include support towards developing capacity of governance institutions at the federal level in Mogadishu and in Somaliland and Puntland, as well as other entities that emerge as legitimate government structures that are ready for, and in need of, assistance. The activities will be designed to improve the reach of government; systematize opportunities for representation and inclusion of citizen interests in the political process; increase the legitimacy of government institutions and representative bodies; and support women's empowerment and leadership. SSG focuses on three overarching objectives, which are designed to:

1) improve the legislative, representative, and oversight functions of Somalia's federal and state deliberative bodies;
2) improve the ability of targeted government institutions to carry out essential functions; and
3) increase citizen awareness of and engagement in government decision-making.

B. Objective Three Assessment

This assessment report focuses on SSG Objective 3, which strives to increase citizen awareness of and engagement in government decision-making. This assessment was conducted in January and February 2015 with the purpose of understanding the current situation in which Somalia CSOs and media operate; to gauge the level of understanding of citizens around constitutional rights and responsibilities; and provide initial recommendations for activity-level interventions in support of SSG's Objective 3 goal. The assessment team was led by Ryan Smith and composed of SSG Objective 3 team leader Hamdi Abdulahi, media specialist Hibak Kalfan, and civil society specialist Abdi-fatah Ahmed. Gender specialist Cara George provided remote assistance and input during the course of the assessment.

There are clear overlapping activities between the three objectives and this report will refer to activities identified in Objective 1 and 2 Assessment Reports and the subsequent Activity Scope of Work (ASOW) where needed. Information gathered on this assessment provides an overview of the status and capacity of civil society and media in all three working regions. The report has also provided an initial set of potential activities from which to support the ASOW for Objective 3. The assessment focused primarily on interviewing civil society and media organizations in Somalia. Government institutions were not engaged as this information was collected under the assessments for Objectives 1 and 2.

II. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Across Somalia, civil society is still adjusting to its role in creating public awareness and

advocating policy changes to government on behalf of stakeholders. Civil society has limited capacity outside of a few organizations to engage effectively in policy debates beyond position papers and basic consultations with officials. Efforts have been made to build coalitions and associations, however, civil society is still largely fragmented. There is little coordination among organizations, especially with implementation or planning of activities.

Both government and civil society acknowledge the lack of awareness among the public on issues of basic governance. Somalis are politically active and are generally very aware of how to engage government at the local level or through traditional governance systems. Both civil society and media are critical actors in educating citizens and holding government accountable to the aspirations of their constituents.

The media landscape in Somalia is vastly diverse, with radio, television and/or print, websites or social media as the primary source of information depending on the location. In Somalia, primarily Mogadishu, there is a saturation of radio stations providing daily news and entertainment to their listenership.

The development of civil society and media is not only important but it is an area where significant successes can be made. This report provides an overview of the sector and a series of challenges, opportunities, and potential activities available to SSG in each.

III.   METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The team utilized a variety of methods to gather data from targeted civil society and media organizations including a literature review, key informant interviews, an advocacy assessment, and limited focus group discussions. Over the course of the assessment, each member of the assessment team traveled to the targeted region to meet directly with civil society organizations, media, and government entities with public outreach responsibilities.

Literature review – The team conducted a review of key documents related to civil society and media including their legal status in each of the target regions as well as strategic plans from various government entities on their view on the role of civil society in their respective spheres of governance. In gathering evidence on the current media landscape with a primary focus on access to information, civic awareness and the role of media in governance, the team focused on media reports produced since 2012 by organizations such as BBC Media Action, the AU/UN Information Support Team, Internews and the InfoAsAid Media and Telecoms Landscape Guide-Somalia 2014.

Key informant interviews – Key informant interviews were used as the primary method for gathering information from media organizations and government entities. Many questions used for media organizations were pulled from the advocacy assessment tool described below to determine their engagement or interest in advocacy efforts with the government. With many influential members of media and civil society including directors, ministers, and chairman, being men, the assessment team ensured inclusiveness by consulting women-focused journalist and legal associations, youth empowerment organizations, and civil society organizations focused on women's right issues. Meetings with government officials focused on its view of the role of civil society and media in policy formulation and citizen engagement in government decision making.

Interviews were conducted with representatives from the national/regional/local governments, media associations, media outlets, and media development organizations. Each entity was selected based on its influence on media's role in governance in Somalia. Because several influential media support organizations are based in Nairobi, the media specialist met with several organizations working in Somalia as part of the media assessment.

IV. MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN SOMALIA

A. Overview

The assessment team focused its efforts primarily on meeting with a broad range of civil society organizations, key media houses, and utilizing notes from previous meetings with government offices from assessments 1 and 2. Several security incidents during this period of the assessment hindered movement and the ability to meet with additional organizations. In some cases, meetings were held via telephone or in group settings where necessary. Government officials in Mogadishu appear willing to meet with select civil society members regarding policy formulation but there is no standard platform for these consultations.

Civil Society Organizations

Aragti Relief and Development Organization (ARDO) – ARDO is an advocacy and human rights NGO with reach in Mogadishu and other south-central cities. It is well supported by several UN development agencies and INGOs mainly through its efforts to promote human rights and environmental protection. It participated in a public awareness campaign for the federal constitution by holding citizen forums communities in and around Mogadishu. ARDO noted that access to policy makers is easy, but influencing policy changes is very difficult. Public consultations between government and civil society occur in Mogadishu but there is little incentive for government to do anything more than listen.

Himilo Relief and Development Agency (HIRDA) – HIRDA works broadly in education, women's empowerment, humanitarian relief, income generation, and social engagement. HIRDA implements a public engagement project that brings pastoralists and government together to discuss relevant policy. HIRDA observed that deeper civic education is needed in Somalia as it is not effective in its current form. Public consultations are now common for some higher-profile bills/policies but feedback to the government is rarely included in the bills and there is limited intention for the consultations to lead to any change of the policy.

Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS) – A large and well-respected policy studies organization, HIPS has produced several prominent policy papers on security, justice reform, federalism, and the constitution. Regarding the status of civil society in policy-making, HIPS noted access to government officials is relatively easy. The public needs more awareness about the constitution and their rights. CSOs need better understanding and training on their role in policy making. Government needs to understand how to better incorporate public input into policy making.

Somali National Women Organization (SNOW) – SNOW identifies itself as a civil society organization but not a non-governmental organization. Given its work with government on issues

related to women's rights and security, it is sometimes viewed as a quasi-governmental organization. They operate through a community-based network focusing on issues from vaccination campaigns to local security dialogues to increasing awareness about the constitution. SNOW stated that some CSOs lack capacity, which impairs their effectiveness in working for policy change with the government. Women, youth, and religious leaders are the most important groups to mobilize around an issue.

Somali Women Development Centre (SWDC) – SWDC is an NGO focusing on women's empowerment and legal aid issues for women. They focus exclusively on their mandate and have not engaged the government on policy issues directly. SWDC believes government is often intimidated by civil society and chooses not to engage because of fear of 'civil society taking over an issue'. Civil society is disorganized in Somalia and this hampers its effectiveness toward influencing government policy.

Peace and Human Rights Network (PHRN) – PHRN is a human rights network with 26 member organizations across Somalia and Puntland. It focuses on three main areas: 1) investigating, documenting, and monitoring human rights violations, 2) reconciliation activities, and 3) public awareness raising on issues such as gender-based violence and HIV prevention. PHRN does not seek out a role in influencing policy with government. It maintains strong relationships with the MoJ as part of its human rights mandate. In general, PHRN feels civil society is poorly resourced and disorganized.

Centre for Research and Dialogue (CRD) – CRD seeks to create a neutral space for various actors to discuss reconciliation and reconstruction efforts in Somalia. It also strives to create better coordination amongst donors and government on peace building efforts. CRD was involved in the civic education campaign via public consultations and public messaging to create greater awareness about the federal constitution. CRD does not directly engage in policy debates and noted that there is no official process for doing so. CRD believes there is a lack of trust between government and civil society which if strengthened would help with policy dialogue efforts.

Somalia-South Central Non-state Actors (SOCENSA) – SOCENSA is a 60-member association of civil society organizations that seeks to strengthen the ability of non-state actors to positively engage in policy making in Mogadishu. It is a sister organization to SONSAF in Somaliland and PUNSAA in Puntland. SOCENSA was a key actor in the government's efforts to create public awareness about the federal constitution. It held a series of one-day public consultations as part of this effort. SOCENSA noted that civil society lacks policy analysis skills and do not always understand how to best engage in policy making with government.

Association for Somali Women Lawyers (ASWL) – ASWL is largely a legal aid organization that supports the rights of the landless and women. They do not engage in policy making, but do also feel that government (Parliament) does not want the input of civil society.

Women Education and Voicing Entrepreneurship (WEAVE) – The organization focuses on some charitable causes for underserved women, but also work in livelihoods and income generation. It feels the government has a 'phobia of CSOs' and feel threatened by CSOs. WEAVE believes CSOs oftentimes have more experience working in the country than do many government officials. It feels that certain established NGOs are invited often to meet with government on policy issues, but it is a small group in which WEAVE is not included. Many CSOs are frustrated that

government is not interested in engaging with them on any topic.

Media

National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) – Established in 2002, the organization works to promote and protect the freedom of journalists. NUSOJ provides vocational and ethics training to journalists and plan to expand these training outside of Mogadishu in 2015. NUSOJ partnered with Internews and the parliamentary subcommittee to hold public consultations on the Media bill in 2013/2014. NUSOJ is currently supporting two civic education programs on Goobjog FM that seek to inform listeners of parliamentary proceedings. NUSOJ noted that media in Mogadishu are mainly the recipients of information from the government; they do not play a big role in shaping the public debate on policy issues.

Star FM – A regional radio station reaching a Somali-speaking population in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya. The station has a history of civil education programming with two live shows dedicated to current issues facing Somalis around Mogadishu and Guriel. In 2013/2014, the station conducted live debates on the Media bill and the Human Rights Commission Act. Star FM views part of its mandate as increasing political discourse amongst Somalis.

Government

Federal Parliament – Although the New Deal principles mandated formal consultations between civil society and Parliament, these are still done informally based on personal relationships. Larger civil society organizations claim to be able to engage with MPs, they do so on an ad hoc basis and not through any formal structure.

Ministry of Finance – CSOs feel they have little access to budgetary or financial data coming out of the MoF. Interviewees also expressed the ministry could improve its job of sharing information to the public, in general. The ministry does not release this information to the public in any formal or informal way and it does not feel the need to do this as part of its mandate.

Ministry of Interior and Federalism – MoIF is responsible for registering NGOs as civil society members, but it is not an active partner with civil society for the most part. There is a question amongst civil society and the ministry itself on the ministry's role in a federalism campaign. The ministry does not see a major role for civil society in its affairs and does not see value in increasing interactions with civil society.

Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation – MoPIC has a strong history of engaging civil society in its national planning efforts. The process involves aggregating inputs from the public on development priorities, which will eventually translate into an outreach campaign regarding the findings and outcomes of the exercise. However, the ministry has not actively engaged civil society and media outside of the development planning and coordination process.

Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs – MoJCA is mandated to increase the awareness of the constitution and the rights of citizens through citizen awareness campaigns. However, it does not have any ongoing activities and there are questions about the overlap between MOJCA and other government agencies (e.g., Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission).

Ministry of Youth and Sports – The ministry is under-resourced and has focused only on basic administrative and strategic planning tasks. However, it is focused on writing and then implementing a National Youth Policy Act which would bring youth and youth-focused civil society organizations together on a series of activities. Once a policy is in place, interactions with civil society will increase substantially as the ministry will require civil society to implement and donors to fund much of the proposed activities.

Ministry of Women and Human Rights – The ministry is well-supported by several donors and INGOs, and it clearly values the partnerships it has with NGOs with similar mandates (women's rights, human rights, etc.). Ministry is considered well-organized and useful in its coordination of donor-funded and local women's rights activities.

Ministry of Information – According to interviewees, MOI operate on an ad hoc basis for communications and messaging. There is still much confusion on the roles between the MOI, President's office, and the Prime Minister's office. MOI manages Radio Mogadishu and Somalia National Television but does not yet utilize either for broad civic education. Ministry convenes a weekly media coordination group with various government offices to coordinate messaging and push for the implementation of the government communications strategy, which includes a public awareness campaign for the provisional constitution, decentralization of federal units, and messaging about the battle against terrorism. The strategy is struggling due to lack of funding.

B. Findings

While the government in Somalia is fairly well resourced with externally-funded technical advisors and several donor-sponsored governance projects, civil society is weak and rather ineffective in the areas of advocacy and shaping government policy. Security concerns and a lack of coordination are factors as well. General findings are listed below:

- **High access to decision makers; low capacity to influence decisions** – Similar to other regions, civil society have little trouble accessing policy makers in Parliament or ministries. However, most lack the resources and technical depth (e.g., research, policy analysis) to add significant value to policy debates. Civil society and media need more tools and skills to both provide better service to government in policy formulation but also in forming coalitions to advocate on behalf of stakeholders.

- **Media is an opportunity** –There is a broad spectrum of media outlets in Mogadishu and more capacity amongst journalists. Several radio stations are creating content that educates their listeners on the happenings in government and major positions of important policy. However, extremists often target journalists and investigative reporting is risky both professionally and personally. SSG is well placed to both build media capacity and utilize media to create civic awareness. In coordination with Internews, there are several strong media players including the Media Resource Center and NUSOJ that provide suitable platforms for such activities. Education and capacity of journalists in Somalia is fragmented and professionalization can be further improved. While many NGOs and media houses provide short-term training for journalists, this is not always reflected in their work. Journalists in Mogadishu do have greater access to training and mentoring, allowing for ethical and advanced reporting training.

- **Focus on civil society as a whole** – Civil society in Mogadishu is fragmented and often unaware of what other organizations are doing. Basic coalition building activities along with selected organizational capacity development support is needed. Strategic planning and coordination of activities will benefit the effectiveness of its advocacy efforts.

- **Low public awareness** – Given the newness of the current governance structure and the prolonged history of civil unrest, it is not surprising that the general public is not highly informed about the policy-making process. A more active media is thought to have increased the public's knowledge of current policy debates, but the role of civil society and the specific functions of government are still lacking. In Somalia, there have been solid examples of civil society working with the government on public awareness campaigns surrounding the constitution. This is a platform from which SSG can build.

V. CONCLUSION

As is well-documented, this is a critical political period in Somalia. Security and political stability are still huge challenges and the trend each takes will determine the future of the three regions as a whole. In Somalia (South-Central), the government is aware that its people, along with the eyes of the world, are watching to see how it is able to take this opportunity forward. It has recently survived a major political crisis with the change in prime minister followed by a cabinet reshuffling after much political wrangling.

While often lacking resources and capacity, civil society and media are well-positioned to support the development of the state. While there is a lack of trust between civil society and government, both recognize the importance and the benefit that the other brings. Civil society can play a much larger role in connecting the public to the government with civic awareness efforts. Civil society needs to better coordinate its efforts among itself and with its stakeholders and to ensure that an inclusive voice is heard on part of Somali citizens. Additionally, it does not yet play an effective role in influencing policy with the government and advocating on behalf of its constituents. Media lacks the capacity and the resources to engage the public in policy debates. It neither keeps the public abreast of government actions thoroughly nor does it effectively hold government accountable for its action or lack thereof.

SSG is uniquely designed so as to be able to tackle governance issues from all angles – government, civil society, and media. In this report, proposed activities along with programmatic challenges and opportunities are included for how SSG can best tackle governance issues through civil society and media while recommending counter-activities for objectives 1 and 2 as a way to balance support.

VI. ANNEX

Annex A. Bibliography of Resources

ANNEX A. BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RESOURCES

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